

Message Text

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APPROVED BY EUR/SOV:MGARRISON

EA/J:EFEATHESTONE (SUBS)

EUR/SE:JMORTON

S/S-O:LRMACFARLANE

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TO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 239418

EXDIS - MILITARY ADDEE HANDLE AS SPECAT EXCLUSIVE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, UR, US

SUBJECT: SOVIET REACTION TO MIG INCIDENT

REF: MOSCOW 14970, MOSCOW 14711

1. FOLLOWING INFORMATION MAY BE PASSED TO JAPANESE
EMBASSY.

2. CONTRARY TO SOVIET ASSERTIONS, AIRCRAFT AND PERSONNEL
INVOLVED IN ACCIDENTAL CROSSING OF BORDER FROM TURKEY IN
1970 WERE NOT RETURNED PROMPTLY. AIRCRAFT WAS BEECHCRAFT
U-8 UNARMED, SPORT OR BUSINESS TYPE LIGHT PASSENGER PLANE
BELONGING TO US MILITARY AID MISSION IN TURKEY. NO
CAMERAS OR ANY RECONNAISSANCE-RELATED EQUIPMENT WAS ON BOARD.
PLANE WAS ON FLIGHT FROM ERZURUM TO KARS, TURKEY. PERSONNEL
ON BOARD WERE THE TWO US GENERAL COMMANDING THE US MILITARY
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PID MISSION, A TURKISH COLONEL, AND AN AMERICAN MAJOR

PILOTING THE PLANE. THE PLANE INADVERTENTLY STRAYED INTO SOVIET TERRITORY BECAUSE THE RADIO BEACON AT THE KARS, TURKEY AIRPORT WAS NOT OPERATING AND THE RADIO BEACON AT THE SOVIET AIRPORT AT LENINAKAN, ARMENIA WAS OPERATING ON THE KARS FREQUENCY. BECAUSE OF CLOUD COVER, THE PILOT MISTOOK LENINAKAN FOR KARS.

3. AFTER LANDING AT LENINAKAN ON OCTOBER 21, THE PERSONNEL AND AIRCRAFT WERE DETAINED IN THE SOVIET UNION UNTIL NOVEMBER 10, 1970 FOR CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION. DURING THIS THREE WEEK PERIOD, AMERICANS WERE INTERROGATED, SOMETIMES IN A INSULTING MANNER, RIGHTS OF AMERICANS TO COMMUNICATE WITH US EMBASSY AND AMERICAN CONSULAR ACCESS WERE PERIODICALLY OBSTRUCTED AND DELAYED, AND SOVIET PROPAGANDA BROADCASTS ACCUSED THE US AND TURKEY OF SPYING AND PROVOCATIVE ACTIONS. IN SPITE OF MANY AMERICAN AND TURKISH REQUESTS, EXPRESSIONS OF REGRET, AND PROMISES TO TAKE MEASURES TO PREVENT FUTURE INTRUSIONS, SOVIETS WOULD NOT RELEASE INNOCENT AMERICANS AND PLANE FOR THREE WEEKS.

4. DIFFERENCES OF 1970 CASE FROM MIG-25 CASE ARE CLEAR: (A). PERSONNEL INVOLVED HAD NO INTENTION OF STAYING IN USSR AND WERE DETAINED AGAINST THEIR WILL, (B). AIRCRAFT WAS CIVILIAN-TYPE AND UNARMED AND, THEREFORE, HAD NO BEARING ON SOVIET SECURITY, (C). US AND TURKEY EXPRESSED REGRETS FOR INCIDENT, (D). SOVIET TREATMENT OF CONSULAR ACCESS TO AMERICANS WAS QUESTIONABLE AT BEST, AND (E). SOVIETS APPLIED PROPAGANDA PRESSURE AGAINST NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES. KISSINGER

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